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ABSTRACT

Nonmetro (rural) blacks continue to lag behind metro (urban and suburban) blacks and whites of all residence categories on rates of graduation from high school and college, functional literacy, preprimary and college enrollment, and adult education. Nonmetro blacks are also less likely to be in the labor force, hold white collar jobs, or have incomes above the poverty level, probably as a result of obtaining less education. Economic development of nonmetro areas, improvement of educational services, career/vocational training programs, and employment training programs are policy directions to be examined to improve the educational status of nonmetro groups. (Author/MK)

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Research Report No. 21

The Education of Nonmetro Blacks

Frank A. Fratoe

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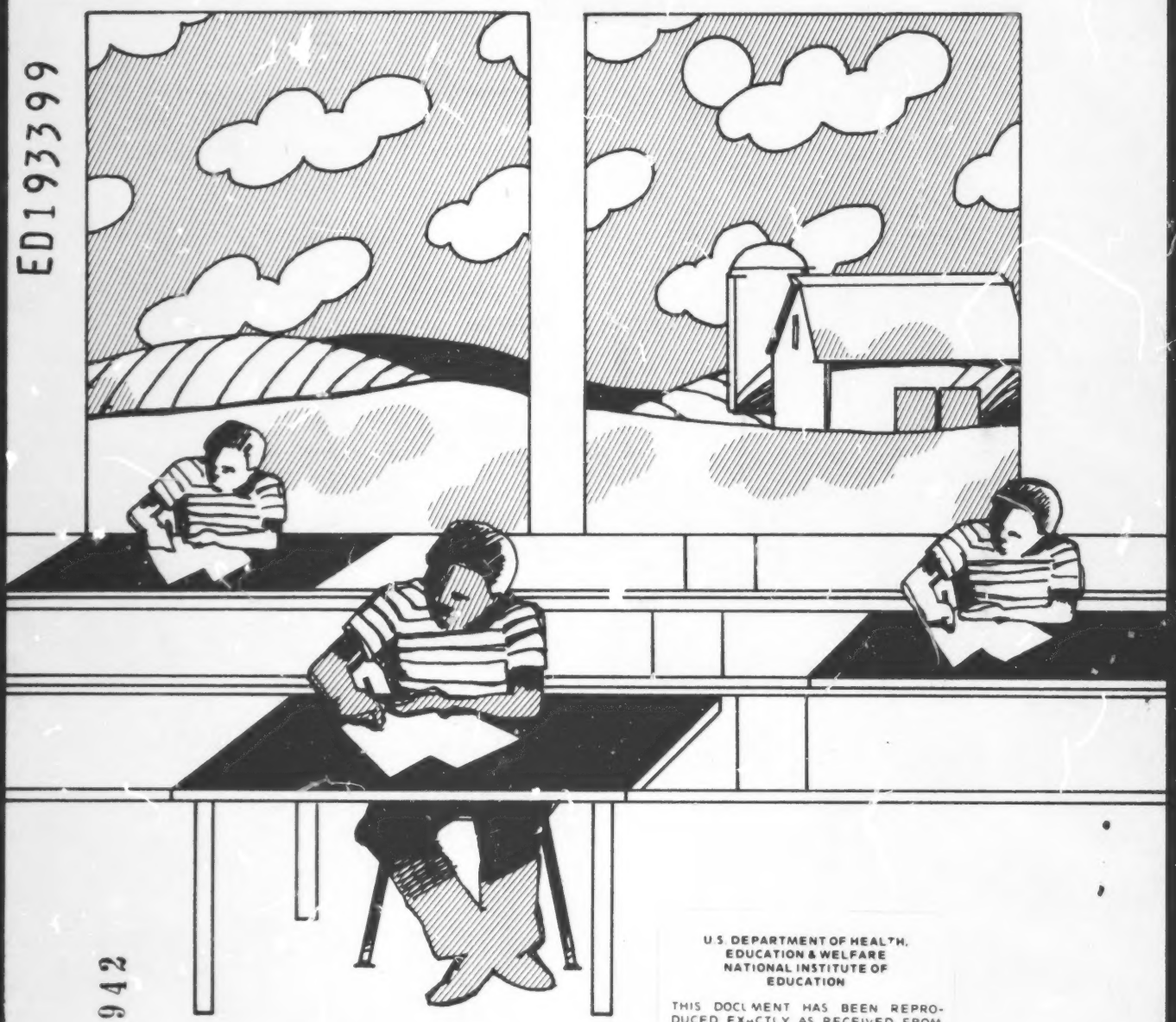

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THE EDUCATION OF NONMETRO BLACKS. By Frank A. Fratoe; Economics, Statistics, and Cooperatives Service; U.S. Department of Agriculture. Rural Development Research Report No. 21.

ABSTRACT

Nonmetro blacks continue to lag behind metro blacks and whites of all residence categories on rates of graduation from high school and college, functional literacy, preprimary and college enrollment, and adult education. Nonmetro blacks are also less likely to be in the labor force, hold white-collar jobs, or have incomes above poverty level, probably as a result of obtaining less education. Various reasons for nonmetro blacks' low standing and policy directions to improve their educational status are examined.

Key words: Nonmetro education, nonmetro blacks, nonmetro labor force, nonmetro development

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CONTENTS

	Page
HIGHLIGHTS	iv
INTRODUCTION	1
EDUCATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS	3
High School Graduation	3
College Completion	4
Functional Illiteracy	4
Preprimary Enrollment	6
School Enrollment	7
Adult Education	7
EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES	8
Labor Force Status	8
Labor Force Participation	10
Employment and Occupations	10
Income	11
Poverty Status	12
Migration	13
POLICY IMPLICATIONS	15
Nonmetro Development	16
General Educational Services	16
Career/Vocational Education	17
Employment Training Programs	17
REFERENCES	18

PREFACE

This report focuses on the educational status of blacks living in nonmetro America. It is third in a series of reports by the same author using national data to describe the educational background of the rural/nonmetro population. The first two reports were *Rural Education and Rural Labor Force in the Seventies* (RDRR-5), USDA, October 1978; and *The Educational Level of Farm Residents and Workers* (RDRR-8), USDA, March 1979.

HIGHLIGHTS

During 1975-77, proportionately fewer nonmetro blacks graduated from high school or college, fewer were functionally literate, and fewer participated in adult education than any other resident group. Other major findings of this report include:

—In 1977, 31.5 percent of all nonmetro black males had completed high school, compared to 47.9 percent for central city black males and 60.1 percent for nonmetro white males.

—Only 3.1 and 5.2 percent of nonmetro black males and females, respectively, had graduated from 4-year colleges in 1977.

—The 1977 functional illiteracy rate of nonmetro blacks was nearly three times that of their metro counterparts, and almost five times that of nonmetro whites.

—Fewer nonmetro black children were enrolled in preprimary programs during both 1970 and 1975 than any other resident group.

—Only 21.1 percent of nonmetro black 20 to 21 year olds attended school (mostly college) in 1977, compared to 31.0 percent for central city blacks and 36.5 percent for suburban whites. Similar trends occurred during later adult years.

—Only 10 percent of all nonmetro residents taking adult education courses in the South in 1975 were black, although blacks represented almost 20 percent of the total southern nonmetro population.

—In 1978, 8.1 percent of nonmetro black males in the labor force held white-collar jobs, compared to 23.0 percent for metro black males and 32.4 percent for nonmetro white males.

—Nonmetro blacks trailed their metro counterparts by $2,000 to $2,500 in income at every level of educational attainment, according to data on 1977 educational levels and 1976 earnings.

—In 1976, 34.7 percent of nonmetro black family heads fell below the poverty level, compared to 25.6 percent of metro blacks and 8.9 percent of nonmetro whites. This may result from nonmetro blacks holding low-paying jobs which require little schooling.

—During 1975-78, there was no greater exodus of college-educated nonmetro blacks to the cities than of those with less than a high school education.

The Education of Nonmetro Blacks

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Sociologist

INTRODUCTION

Despite widespread problems in education for nonmetro blacks, recent research has focused on the educational problems of metro blacks, particularly those living in the inner cities. Such problems as high rates of school absenteeism and dropout, low achievement in basic skills, unreadiness for the transition from school to work, and other educational issues relating to metro blacks have been extensively analyzed in the professional literature as well as by the news media (5, 19, 23, 24, 36).[1] These problems hinder the human resource development of a large minority population and deserve full consideration by researchers and policymakers.

Current literature often implies, however, that only metro black education issues need to be studied because the black population has become almost totally urban. This is not the case. There is a sizable group of blacks residing in nonmetro America whose educational status and needs have not been accorded nearly as much indepth analysis. Moreover, nonmetro blacks cannot be "depicted as a vanishing population" according to some observers (9), since the proportion of blacks residing in nonmetro areas is no longer decreasing.

This study examines several issues: the general education of nonmetro blacks, their educational problems, and preparation of the nonmetro black labor force. The educational characteristics analyzed are high school graduation, college completion, functional illiteracy, preprimary school enrollment, and adult education. Outcome variables regarding nonmetro black workers are labor force status and participation, occupation, earnings, poverty status, and migration. The latest available data are cited in all cases. All quantitative evidence has been collected from secondary sources, published and unpublished, supplied by the Census Bureau, the National Center for Education Statistics, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Since the data were originally obtained through sample surveys, estimates may differ from figures that would have resulted from a complete census.[2] The data are compared not only by race and metro-nonmetro residence but by other categories wherever feasible.

The relative number of nonmetro blacks was once much higher than it is now. Before World War I, about three-fourths of the black population lived in nonmetro areas, virtually all in the South (15). But as southern agriculture became mechanized and opportunities for sharecroppers and farm laborers declined, blacks were attracted by the comparatively plentiful jobs in metro labor markets. The possibility of more equal access to better social services, including education, also may have made cities attractive destinations. Whatever the basic motivation, subsequent migration to cities in the North and West as well as to southern urban areas has transformed blacks into a largely metro-based population (17, 26).

Nevertheless, over 6 million blacks in the United States, or 26 percent of the total black population, reside in nonmetro America (table 1). Despite continued farm outmigration, nonmetro blacks increased by about 700,000 during 1970-77, which was higher than the increase in the number of their metro central city counterparts (1). The proportion of blacks living in nonmetro areas remained constant during 1970-77; the majority of nonmetro blacks—90 percent—reside in the South (table 2). Metro blacks, on the other hand, are

[1] Underscored numbers in parentheses refer to literature cited at the end of this report.

[2] Consult published reports for a description of sample errors.

Table 1–U.S. population, by race and metro-nonmetro status

Race and metro-nonmetro status	1970	1977	1970	1977
	— *Thousands* —		— *Percent* —	
Total population	199,819	212.566	100.0	100.0
Metro[1]	137,058	143,107	68.6	67.3
Central cities[2]	62,876	59,993	31.5	28.2
Suburbs[3]	74,182	83,114	37.1	39.1
Nonmetro[4]	62,761	69,459	31.4	32.7
Black	22,056	24,474	100.0	100.0
Metro	16,342	18,048	74.1	73.7
Central cities	12,909	13,451	58.5	55.0
Suburbs	3,433	4,596	15.6	18.7
Nonmetro	5,714	6,427	25.9	26.3
White	175,276	184,335	100.0	100.0
Metro	118,938	122,177	67.9	66.3
Central cities	48,909	44,951	27.9	24.4
Suburbs	70,029	77,226	40.0	41.9
Nonmetro	56,338	62,158	32.1	33.7

[1]Metro refers to population residing in Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSAs) as defined in 1970. Except in the New England States, an SMSA is a county or group of contiguous counties containing at least one city of 50,000 inhabitants or more, or "twin cities" with a combined population of at least 50,000. In the New England States, SMSAs consist of towns and cities instead of counties.

[2]Central cities include (1) the largest city in an SMSA and (2) any additional city or cities in an SMSA with at least 250,000 inhabitants, or a population of one-third or more of that of the largest city and a minimum population of 25,000.

[3]Suburbs (designated as "outside central cities" by the Census Bureau) refer to population residing in an SMSA but outside of central cities.

[4]Nonmetro is defined as population residing outside of SMSAs.

Source: (34, tables D and F).

Table 2–U.S. black population, by metro-nonmetro status and region, 1977

Metro-nonmetro status	Total	Region[1]			
		North east	North central	West	South
			Thousands		
Total black population	24,474	4,177	5,002	2,144	13,151
Metro[2]	18,048	4,020	4,624	2,077	7,326
Central cities	13,451	3,179	3,864	1,342	5,066
Suburbs	4,596	841	760	735	2,260
Nonmetro[2]	6,427	157	378	67	5,825
			Percent		
Total black population	100.0	17.1	20.4	8.8	53.7
Metro	100.0	22.3	25.6	11.5	40.6
Central cities	100.0	23.6	28.7	10.0	37.7
Suburbs	100.0	18.3	16.5	16.0	49.2
Nonmetro	100.0	2.4	5.9	1.0	90.6

[1]The four regions are: Northeast (Conn., Maine, Mass., N.H., N.J., N.Y., Pa., R.I., Vt.); North Central (Ill., Ind., Iowa, Kans., Mich., Minn., Mo., Nebr., N. Dak., Ohio, S. Dak., Wis.); South (Ala., Ark., Del., D.C., Fla., Ga., Ky., La., Md., Miss., N.C., Okla., S.C., Tenn., Tex., Va., W. Va.); and West (Ariz., Cal., Colo., Hawaii, Idaho, Mont., Nev., N. Mex., Oreg., Utah, Wash., Wyo.).

[2]The definitions of metro and nonmetro are the same as those used in table 1 and will apply to all subsequent tables and graphs.

Source: (34, table 3).

7

more evenly distributed throughout the four major regions.

Nonmetro blacks have several disadvantages such as high levels of poverty, inadequate housing, and poor health. Many nonmetro blacks lack the general education and marketable career skills required for employment in nonfarm enterprises (13). Industries recently developing in the nonmetro South have tended to avoid counties with high concentrations of blacks, possibly because of discrimination but more likely because the labor force is presumed to be less productive (35). Thus, some of the nonmetro economic growth fails to directly benefit blacks, and black contributions to nonmetro development are underutilized.

EDUCATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

In order to determine the educational status of nonmetro blacks and their educational preparation for labor force activities, it is necessary to examine the schooling of this group. Reviewing high school and college completion rates is an appropriate way to begin this study.

High School Graduation

Nonmetro blacks are far behind other residence groups in terms of those 25 years old and over finishing high school (table 3). In 1977, only 31.5 percent of nonmetro black males had completed high school, compared to 47.9 percent for central city black males and 60.1 percent for nonmetro white males. Corresponding differences for females were quite similar. Conspicuously fewer nonmetro black men and women graduated from high school compared to the percentage of suburban white males who had graduated—73.3 percent.

What is even more noteworthy, however, is the fact that nonmetro blacks did not make any relative gains during 1970-77 (fig. 1). Although they achieved absolute increases, nonmetro blacks did not close the wide gaps in high school completion rates between themselves and other residence groups. For example, nonmetro black women trailed their central city counterparts by 16.7 percentage points in 1970 and by 18.7 points in 1977. Nonmetro

Table 3 —Persons 25 years old and over who have completed 4 years of high school or more, by selected categories

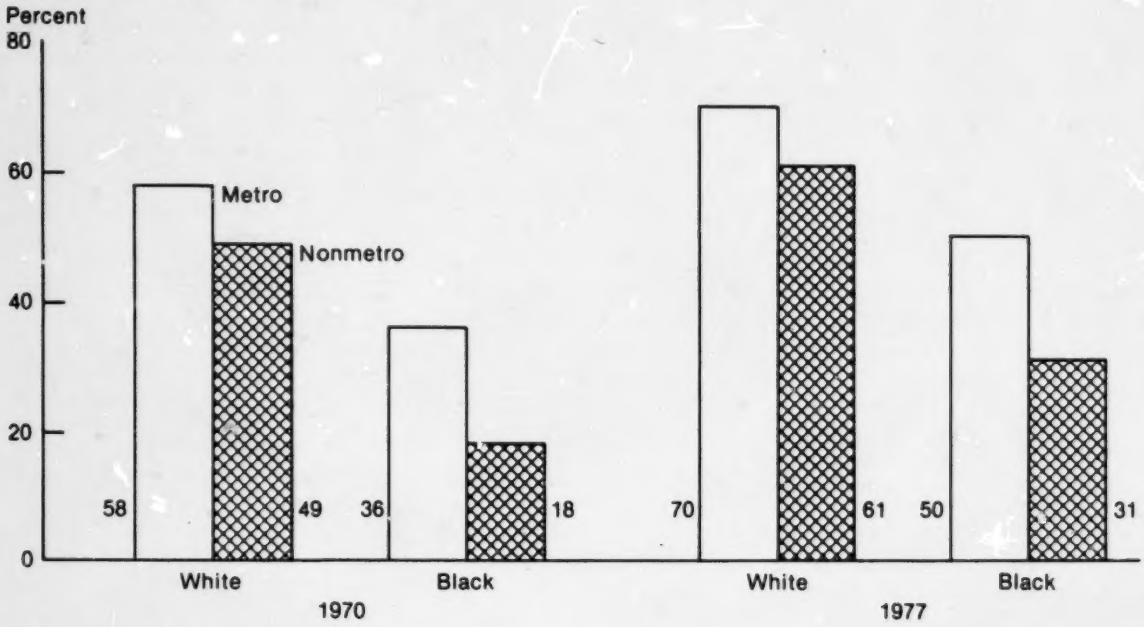
Race and metro-nonmetro status	1970		1977	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
	Percent			
Total population	52.3	53.3	65.6	64.4
Metro	55.7	55.7	69.3	67.1
Central cities	51.4	50.7	64.5	61.2
Suburbs	59.3	60.2	72.6	71.7
Nonmetro	44.8	47.9	57.9	58.6
Black	30.1	32.4	45.6	45.4
Metro	34.4	36.6	50.3	50.6
Central cities	34.5	36.5	47.9	49.4
Suburbs	33.7	36.9	57.1	54.5
Nonmetro	16.9	19.8	31.5	30.7
White	54.4	55.5	67.5	66.5
Metro	57.9	57.9	71.3	69.2
Central cities	54.7	53.8	67.9	63.9
Suburbs	60.3	61.1	73.3	72.5
Nonmetro	47.0	50.4	60.1	61.3

Source: (34, table 9).

8

Figure 1

Percentage of Metro and Nonmetro High School Graduates, by Race



Persons 25 years old and over.
Source: (34, table 9).

black men lagged behind nonmetro white men by 30.1 percentage points in 1970 and by 28.6 points in 1977, an inappreciable change.

College Completion

Few nonmetro blacks ever complete 4 years of college. This is not surprising, given the low numbers who graduate from high school. Only 3.1 and 5.2 percent of nonmetro black males and females, respectively, were 4-year college graduates in 1977, compared to 11.5 percent for suburban black females, 14.1 percent for nonmetro white males, or 22.5 percent for central city white males (table 4).

Nonmetro blacks made no progress relative to other population groups in closing the gaps in college completion rates during 1970-77, and continued to trail even their central city counterparts. Indeed, nonmetro blacks actually fell further behind metro blacks, as well as nonmetro whites (table 4). Some college graduates in the former group may have migrated to urban areas seeking better career opportunities, but these trends generally mean little increase in the number of nonmetro black professionals, managers, and other occupations requiring 4 years of college training.

Functional Illiteracy

Nonmetro blacks' functional illiteracy rates are decreasing. This variable is conventionally defined as the failure to complete at least 5 years of elementary school. The functional illiteracy rate for nonmetro blacks declined from 26 to 18 percent between 1970 and 1977; this represents a sharper decrease than that for either metro blacks or nonmetro whites (fig. 2).

Despite progress, however, the functional illiteracy rate for nonmetro blacks in 1977 was nearly three times that of their metro counterparts and nearly five times that of nonmetro whites. The rate for nonmetro black men—22.5 percent—was the highest of all residential groups in 1977 (table 5). Functional

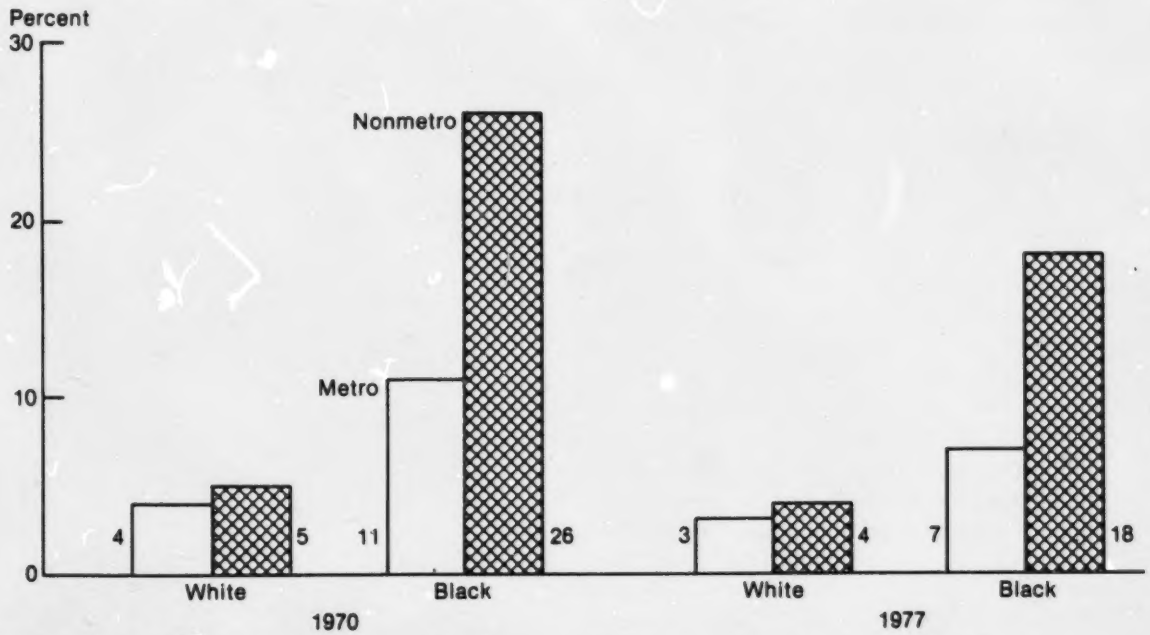
Table 4 —Persons 25 years old and over who have completed 4 years of college or more, by selected categories

Race and metro-nonmetro status	1970		1977	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
	Percent			
Total population	13.6	8.2	19.2	12.0
Metro	15.7	8.9	22.0	13.3
Central cities	13.9	8.4	19.9	12.6
Suburbs	17.2	9.5	23.5	14.1
Nonmetro	9.2	6.6	13.3	9.4
Black	4.2	4.6	7.0	7.4
Metro	4.7	4.8	8.3	8.1
Central cities	4.5	4.5	6.9	7.1
Suburbs	5.4	5.6	12.5	11.5
Nonmetro	2.7	4.0	3.1	5.2
White	14.5	8.5	20.2	12.4
Metro	16.8	9.3	23.4	13.7
Central cities	15.7	9.1	22.5	13.2
Suburbs	17.6	9.6	23.9	14.1
Nonmetro	9.7	6.8	14.1	9.8

Source: (34, table 9).

Figure 2

Percentage of Metro and Nonmetro Functional Illiterates, by Race



Functional illiterates are defined as those persons 25 years old and over who have completed less than 5 years of school.
Source: (34, table 9).

Table 5 —Persons 25 years old and over who have completed less than 5 years of elementary school (functional illiterates), by selected categories

Race and metro-nonmetro status	1970		1977	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
	Percent			
Total population	5.9	4.8	4.0	3.5
Metro	4.9	4.5	3.2	3.1
Central cities	6.2	5.7	4.6	4.3
Suburbs	3.8	3.3	2.2	2.1
Nonmetro	8.1	5.6	5.7	4.2
Black	17.7	11.7	12.0	8.0
Metro	13.0	8.9	8.5	5.6
Central cities	12.1	8.4	8.9	5.6
Suburbs	16.5	11.0	7.4	5.7
Nonmetro	32.0	20.4	22.5	14.9
White	4.7	4.0	3.1	2.8
Metro	4.0	3.8	2.6	2.7
Central cities	4.9	5.0	3.6	3.9
Suburbs	3.3	2.9	2.0	1.9
Nonmetro	6.2	4.2	4.3	3.1

Source: (34, table 9.)

illiteracy runs as high as 30 to 40 percent of black farm residents (12). Many adults have simply not developed the basic literacy skills needed to pursue greater socioeconomic opportunities.

Preprimary Enrollment

Black nonmetro children are the least likely to be enrolled in preprimary programs, including prekindergarten and kindergarten (table 6). Preprimary enrollment for nonmetro "black and other" races (primarily blacks) went up about 10 percent during 1970-75. Enrollment for metro residence groups rose similarly during the same period, except for "black and other" surburban residents, who sustained an almost 18-percent increase. In 1975, "black and other" nonmetro children trailed their central city counterparts by over 14 percentage points.

Although there is some debate concerning the long-term benefits of preprimary enrollment, prekindergarten and kindergarten classes expose children to the learning/teaching practices of formal schooling. Children attending these classes may have an early advantage in achieving the basic literacy skills necessary for later educational progress. Nonmetro black children, because they are more likely to enroll later than metro black or nonmetro white children, may find themselves in competitive difficulty even as they begin schooling. The

Table 6 —Preprimary enrollment of children 3 to 5 years old, by race and metro-nonmetro status[1]

Race and metro-nonmetro status	1970	1975
	Percent	
Total population	37.5	48.7
Metro	41.5	52.2
Central cities	39.4	49.9
Suburbs	43.2	54.1
Nonmetro	30.2	41.2
Black and other	35.7	48.7
Metro	39.8	51.8
Central cities	40.2	50.3
Suburbs	38.6	56.2
Nonmetro	26.1	36.0
White	37.8	48.6
Metro	41.9	52.3
Central cities	39.1	49.6
Suburbs	43.6	53.9
Nonmetro	30.9	41.8

[1] Preprimary level is defined as including prekindergarten and kindergarten programs.

Source: (21, table 11).

relative scarcity of preprimary programs in the South could have a bearing on this problem (11).

School Enrollment

Between the ages of 6 and 16, when State laws generally require pupil attendance, nonmetro black school enrollment rates are no lower than those of other residence groups. In fact, the percentage of black 16 to 17 year olds enrolled in 1977 was actually higher than that of their nonmetro white counterparts (table 7). In the late teen and early twenty age span, however, school enrollment of nonmetro blacks decreased sharply, a more pronounced drop than for other groups. For example, only 21.1 percent of nonmetro black 20 to 21 year olds were attending school (mostly college) in 1977 compared to 31.0 percent for central city blacks and 36.5 percent for suburban whites in the same age category. Similar trends occurred during later adult years, ages 25 to 34.

The low post-high school enrollment rate by nonmetro blacks could simply reflect the low rate on this variable by all nonmetro residents (table 7). Nonmetro high school seniors are usually less inclined to attend college than metro seniors (11). Is there some aspect of the nonmetro environment which discourages young people, black or white, from continuing their formal education? Evidence presented in later sections may help answer this question.

Adult Education

Nonmetro blacks who have not finished high school or college could use another means to augment their learning skills—adult education. Yet few have done so. Far fewer nonmetro blacks 17 years old and over pursued adult education in 1975 than did other residence groups in the four major geographic regions (table 8). Of nonmetro dwellers taking adult education classes in the South, only 10 percent were black, though they represent a group with almost 20 percent of the total southern nonmetro population (34). It is not clear whether the latter's low participation derives from a lack of opportunity or inadequate motivation. Both financial shortages and insufficient knowledge about programs may deter participation by nonmetro residents in general (14).

Table 7 —School enrollment of persons 16 to 34 years old, by selected categories, 1977

Race and metro-nonmetro status	Age category					
	16-17	18-19	20-21	22-24	25-29	30-34
	Percent					
Total population	88.9	46.2	31.8	16.5	10.8	6.9
Metro	89.8	48.9	35.8	18.7	12.1	7.9
Central cities	88.2	48.6	34.3	19.3	13.3	8.5
Suburbs	90.8	49.0	36.9	18.2	11.2	7.5
Nonmetro	87.0	40.4	23.1	11.7	7.8	4.6
Black	90.8	48.3	29.5	15.2	11.3	9.0
Metro	90.6	48.9	32.5	15.7	12.7	11.1
Central cities	90.6	48.6	31.0	15.4	13.2	11.2
Suburbs	90.6	49.7	37.3	16.5	11.7	10.9
Nonmetro	91.5	46.6	21.1	13.8	5.8	2.6
White	88.5	45.5	31.8	16.3	10.6	6.6
Metro	89.5	48.3	35.8	18.7	11.9	7.4
Central cities	86.8	48.0	34.7	19.7	13.1	7.6
Suburbs	90.8	48.7	36.5	18.0	11.1	7.3
Nonmetro	86.5	39.5	25.5	11.2	7.9	4.8

Source: (33, tables 1 and 2).

Table 8 —Participants in adult education, by selected categories, 1975[1]

Region[2] and metro-nonmetro status	Residents 17 years old and over participating in adult education[3]			
	Total	White	Black	Other
	Percent			
Northeast	10.4	9.7	0.6	0.1
Metro	10.6	9.5	.9	.2
Central cities	8.2	6.5	1.4	.3
Suburbs	12.2	11.7	.4	.1
Nonmetro	10.4	10.3	.1	.0
North Central	12.0	11.3	.6	.1
Metro	13.0	12.1	.8	.1
Central cities	11.2	9.5	1.5	.2
Suburbs	14.3	14.0	.2	.1
Nonmetro	9.7	9.6	.1	.0
South	10.9	9.6	1.2	.1
Metro	13.0	11.5	1.4	.1
Central cities	12.1	9.9	2.1	.1
Suburbs	13.7	12.9	.7	.1
Nonmetro	8.2	7.3	.8	.1
West	17.8	16.4	.6	.8
Metro	18.3	16.8	.7	.8
Central cities	16.5	14.1	1.2	1.2
Suburbs	19.7	18.5	.5	.7
Nonmetro	15.9	15.4	.1	.4

[1] Only civilian noninstitutional population 17 years old and over are included.
[2] The four regions are the same as those defined in table 2.
[3] "Participant in adult education" is defined as a person 17 or older who is not a full-time student and is engaged in one or more activities of organized instruction in academic and occupational courses of any duration and at any level from basic orientation to professional refresher; included are single sessions or multiple classes, workshops, seminars, institutes, lecture-discussion series, study groups, laboratories, shop courses, and other kinds of student-teacher instructional relationships.

Source: (20, table 14).

EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

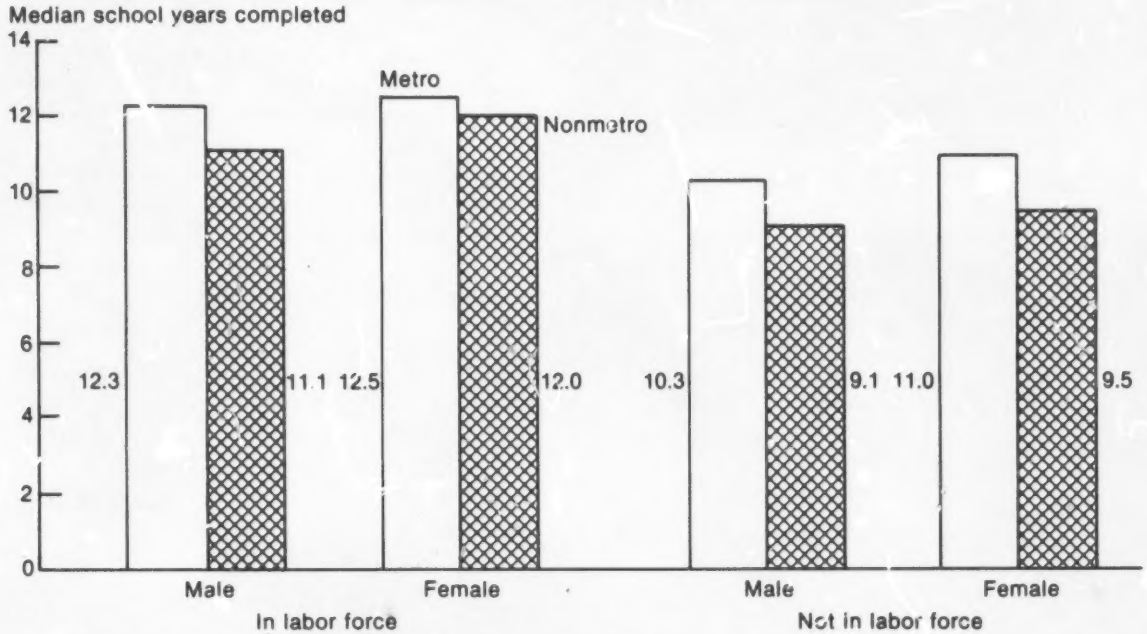
Nonmetro blacks' outcomes on the educational variables examined affect their labor force status and participation, as well as their occupations. Schooling is not, of course, the sole determinant of labor force activities. Conditions not directly related to education like health or job accessibility, to name only two, have a great bearing on work status. Informal education such as skills training on the job is also important. But the scholastic and career preparation skills learned through formal schooling can be decisive in determining how work opportunities are utilized, particularly for those with longstanding educational problems.

Labor Force Status

Nonmetro blacks in the labor force have completed more school years on average than those who are not (fig. 3). In 1977, males and females outside the labor force trailed their labor force counterparts by 2.0 and 2.5 school years completed, respectively (table 9). A similar situation existed for metro black men and women except they had comparatively more years of schooling. Some individuals may not enter the work force because they lack sufficiently advanced schooling to compete in local labor markets.

Figure 3

Labor Force Status of Metro and Nonmetro Blacks, by Educational Level, 1977



"Blacks" include all civilians 16 years old and over who are non-white; this category is composed primarily of black persons.
Source: (31).

Table 9 —Labor force status and median years of school completed, persons 16 years old and over, by selected categories, March 1977

Race and metro-nonmetro status	In civilian labor force[1]		Not in civilian labor force[2]	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
	Years			
Black and other	12.2	12.4	10.0	10.6
Metro	12.3	12.5	10.3	11.0
Central cities	12.3	12.4	10.2	10.9
Suburbs	12.5	12.6	10.6	11.7
Nonmetro	11.1	12.0	9.1	9.5
White	12.6	12.6	10.9	12.2
Metro	12.7	12.6	11.4	12.2
Central cities	12.7	12.6	11.4	12.1
Suburbs	12.7	12.6	11.4	12.3
Nonmetro	12.4	12.5	10.1	12.0

[1] The total of all civilians 16 years of age and over classified as employed or unemployed.
[2] All persons not classified as employed or unemployed; persons doing only incidental unpaid family work (less than 15 hours) are also included in this group.

Source: (51).

Labor Force Participation

Increased education yields an advantage in the labor force for "black and other" nonmetro residents. This tendency is shared by all population categories, with some interesting variations (table 10). Labor force participation in 1977 was noticeably higher for college-graduated nonmetro black females (75.0 percent) than for their equally educated white counterparts (61.8 percent). The same also held true for metro females. The figures may underscore black women's greater use of a college degree as they now capitalize on more professional, managerial, and administrative opportunities (10).[3] A higher percentage of nonmetro "black and other" males with limited schooling participated in the labor force than did nonmetro white males (57.9 to 47.9 percent for less than 8 school years). But at advanced educational levels, the percentage of nonmetro black and other males in the labor force was lower than for their white counterparts (72.6 to 80.8 percent for 1-3 years of college). Four-year college graduates, however, recorded nearly equal percentages. These same patterns marked the relationships between metro and nonmetro black men alike.

[3]There also may be the need for black women to supplement family income because black males' median income levels are generally lower than those of white males with the same number of school years completed.

Employment and Occupations

Unemployment appears to be more of a problem for nonmetro black workers than for their white counterparts. The former (both men and women) had higher unemployment rates in 1978 than other groups except metro blacks (table 11). Many potential workers are uncounted in the unemployment statistics because they either give up their job search or

Table 10 —Percentage of persons 16 years old and over in the labor force, by selected categories, March 1977[1]

Race, sex, and metro-nonmetro status	Elementary		High school		College	
	Less than 8 years	8 years	1-3 years	4 years	1-3 years	4 years or more
	Percent					
Black and other male	53.5	58.6	62.0	83.2	78.6	88.8
Metro	50.7	56.9	62.3	82.8	79.6	88.4
Central cities	46.4	56.6	61.7	82.0	77.7	86.4
Suburbs	63.0	57.6	64.5	84.8	84.1	91.6
Nonmetro	57.9	63.6	61.3	84.4	72.6	91.3
Black and other female	25.9	35.6	40.5	62.0	61.5	77.0
Metro	25.7	33.4	39.8	61.0	63.7	77.4
Central cities	24.9	33.8	37.0	60.5	62.9	78.8
Suburbs	28.3	32.2	49.7	62.4	65.4	74.9
Nonmetro	26.1	40.4	42.3	66.0	52.3	75.0
White male	49.8	55 0	68.6	85.7	81.9	90.4
Metro	51.3	53.9	68.6	85.8	82.3	90.6
Central cities	51.0	52.5	67.7	83.0	79.6	88.7
Suburbs	51.6	54.9	69.1	87.3	83.9	91.7
Nonmetro	47.9	56.5	68.7	85.7	80.8	89.5
White female	19.4	24.3	40.2	54.0	55.0	64.0
Metro	18.0	24.8	41.5	54.3	56.5	64.8
Central cities	18.9	23.7	38.3	54.6	58.7	66.7
Suburbs	17.0	25.7	41.9	54.1	55.1	63.6
Nonmetro	21.5	23.5	39.8	53.5	51.3	61.8

[1] Percentage of the civilian noninstitutional population in the labor force.

Source: (31).

Table 11 —Employment status and occupation groups of persons 16 years old and over in the civilian labor force, by selected categories, March 1978

Race, employment status, and occupation group	Metro		Nonmetro	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
	Percent			
Black	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Employed	86.2	86.4	90.0	86.5
Professional workers	7.1	12.1	2.8	7.6
Managers, except farm	5.6	2.9	2.6	1.3
Sales workers	2.5	2.3	.7	1.5
Clerical workers	7.8	28.1	2.0	10.4
Craft workers	13.4	.7	14.6	1.6
Operatives, exc. trans. eq.	13.7	10.2	15.5	25.1
Transport equip. operatives	8.6	.3	7.1	.6
Laborers, except farm	11.8	.9	21.6	1.9
Farm workers	.5	.1	10.1	.8
Service workers	15.2	28.8	13.0	35.7
Unemployed	13.8	13.6	10.0	13.5
White	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Employed	94.8	94.2	93.7	93.4
Professional workers	16.7	16.1	11.4	13.9
Managers, except farm	15.3	6.7	12.7	5.6
Sales workers	7.1	7.6	4.3	5.7
Clerical workers	6.6	36.3	4.0	27.7
Craft workers	19.2	1.6	21.3	1.9
Operatives, exc. trans. eq.	9.8	8.3	12.3	13.2
Transport equip. operatives	4.9	.5	6.0	.8
Laborers, except farm	5.9	.8	6.5	1.3
Farm workers	1.0	.4	8.9	2.4
Service workers	8.3	15.9	6.3	20.9
Unemployed	5.2	5.8	6.3	6.6

Source: (32, table 29).

are underemployed in farming or other lower paying work. These factors may be more prevalent in the nonmetro sector, especially where many blacks lack the educational background and career skills necessary to compete for the comparatively fewer white-collar jobs available (17).

Nonmetro blacks have an unmistakable disadvantage in terms of white-collar employment (table 11). In 1978, only 8.1 percent of nonmetro black males in the labor force held white-collar occupations, compared to 32.4 percent of nonmetro white males.[4] Nonmetro black females were somewhat better off, chiefly because of higher employment in professional and clerical occupations. Representation of nonmetro blacks in blue-collar and service jobs, on the other hand, was considerably greater than other residential groups. Recent growth of southern nonmetro industry does not seem to have altered the situation to any appreciable extent (35). Blue-collar/service occupations are filled by people who average only a high school education or less (11).

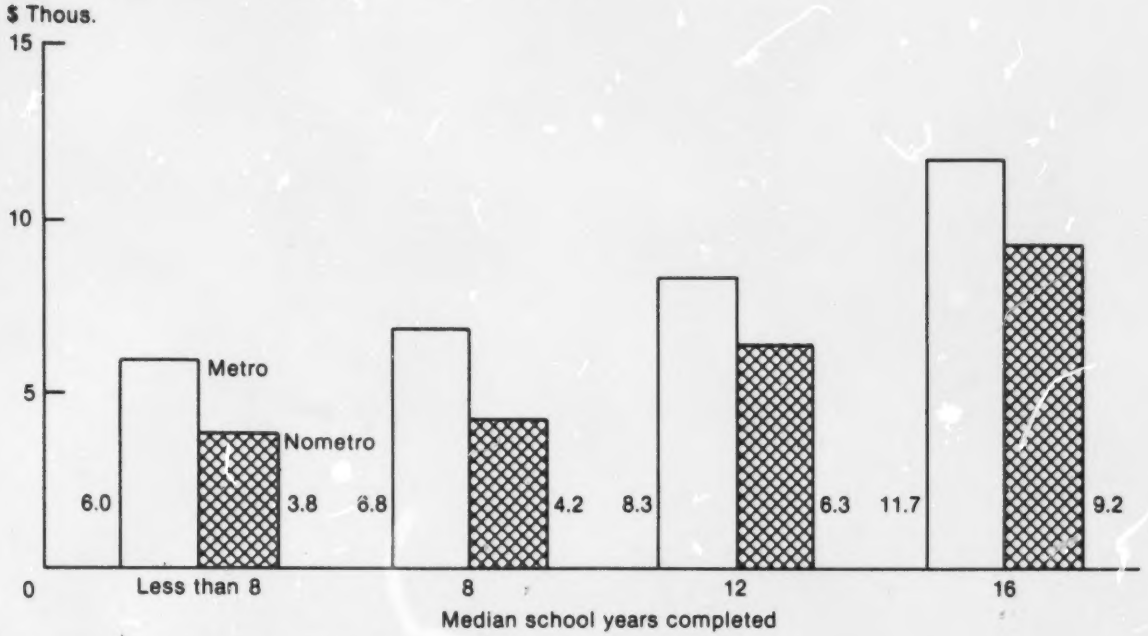
Income

Nonmetro blacks trailed their metro counterparts by $2,000 to $2,500 at every level of educational attainment, according to data on 1977 educational levels and 1976 earnings (fig. 4). This means that despite the importance of schooling, other factors have much to do with determining job gains and earning power. Among them is the relatively inferior earnings' position maintained by all nonmetro residents, regardless of race or sex

[4]Nonmetro black males' white-collar rates were also lower than their metro counterparts, but the most relevant comparisons here were between nonmetro groups, thus standardizing for employment structure.

Figure 4

Earnings of Metro and Nonmetro Blacks, by Educational Level, 1976



Mean earnings of blacks 25 years old and over.
Source: (24, table 10).

(table 12). Nonmetro women, white and black, are principally disadvantaged because they gain only the smallest economic payoffs at each educational level. Historic racial/ethnic bias and consequent detrimental effects on employment opportunities may be other factors affecting all nonmetro blacks. Of course, the latter problem may be true of other nonmetro minorities such as Hispanics, Native Americans, migrant farmworkers, and perhaps low-income whites as well.

Still, the data clearly show that higher earnings are associated with increased schooling for all residence groups. High school graduates make larger sums than those with less than elementary school training, while college graduates earn even more. For nonmetro blacks, there was a $5,400 annual earnings differential between 4-year college graduates and those who dropped out of elementary school.[5] Thus, an educational investment undeniably nets work/income payoffs. Acknowledgment of this fact should not detract in any way from education's other social and personal benefits. Dollar figures cannot easily be assigned to cultural understanding or the heightened awareness learning can bring.

[5] This gap has not changed appreciably since 1969; mean earnings of nonmetro blacks increased only slightly at each attainment level during 1969-76 (in constant 1976 dollars).

Poverty Status

Poverty in the United States is often considered an urban phenomenon. Although large numbers of poor people do live in cities, a disproportionate share of the Nation's poor are nonmetro residents. Many persistently poor counties are located in nonmetro areas, particularly in the South where there is a close relationship between areas with a concentration of poverty and the residential dominance of minorities (6, 7). Poverty levels are officially determined by several factors including family size, presence of children, sex, and farm-nonfarm residence. Actual thresholds are fixed according to combined factors. For example,

Table 12—Mean earnings of persons 25 years old and over by selected categories, 1976

Metro-nonmetro status and school years completed	White		Black	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
	Dollars			
Metro, central cities:				
Elementary:				
Less than 8 years	8,194	3,739	7,345	3,512
8 years	10,114	4,391	9,111	4,468
High school:				
1-3 years	10,827	4,756	8,933	4,537
4 years	13,018	6,230	9,793	6,663
College:				
1-3 years	13,765	6,920	11,191	7,582
4 years	18,120	8,575	11,522	9,784
5 years or more	21,537	10,575	18,429	13,025
Metro, suburbs:				
Elementary:				
Less than 8 years	8,647	3,623	7,327	(1)
8 years	11,060	4,056	(1)	(1)
High school:				
1-3 years	12,466	4,681	9,405	4,288
4 years	14,479	5,899	10,519	6,582
College:				
1-3 years	15,615	6,522	10,736	7,120
4 years	19,855	7,943	16,240	(1)
5 years or more	24,039	10,681	(1)	(1)
Nonmetro:				
Elementary:				
Less than 8 years	6,541	3,131	4,580	2,225
8 years	7,911	3,661	5,845	2,684
High school:				
1-3 years	9,831	4,068	6,251	3,144
4 years	11,981	4,998	7,778	4,726
College:				
1-3 years	13,048	5,134	(1)	5,348
4 years	15,672	6,471	(1)	(1)
5 years or more	18,267	9,681	(1)	(1)

[1] Data base less than 75,000 persons.

Source: (34, table 10).

the 1976 poverty level for a nonfarm family of four was about $5,800.

Nonmetro blacks suffer very high rates of poverty (table 13). In 1976, 34.7 percent of nonmetro black family heads fell below the poverty level, compared to 25.6 percent for their metro counterparts and 8.9 percent for nonmetro white family heads. Even among family heads employed full-time, nonmetro blacks fell below the poverty level almost three times as often as central city blacks (18.5 vs. 7.0 percent, respectively). Corresponding figures for unemployed metro and nonmetro black family heads were nearly equal, but the disparity for unrelated individuals again was large (55.9 vs. 36.4 percent). Such facts are probably related to nonmetro blacks employment in low-paying, unskilled positions which require little educational preparation. Without the opportunity to obtain better skills, low-income persons have difficulty leaving fields where the labor supply is large and the wages are small.

Migration

Better educated blacks are supposedly more likely to leave nonmetro areas and migrate to cities because of enhanced earning

Table 13 —Percentage of family heads and unrelated individuals below poverty level, by selected categories, 1976[1]

Race and metro-nonmetro status	Family units below poverty level[2]			
	Family heads[3]	Full-time employed family heads[4]	Unemployed family heads[5]	Unrelated individuals[6]
	Percent			
Total population	9.4	3.0	25.3	24.9
Metro	8.5	2.0	26.2	21.9
Central cities	12.6	2.9	32.8	24.6
Suburbs	5.7	1.4	19.1	18.2
Nonmetro	11.1	5.2	23.6	32.9
Black	27.9	9.4	58.4	39.8
Metro	25.6	6.6	58.3	36.2
Central cities	28.0	7.0	59.1	36.4
Suburbs	19.0	5.8	55.0	35.3
Nonmetro	34.7	18.5	58.6	55.9
White	7.1	2.4	19.0	22.7
Metro	6.2	1.4	18.9	19.4
Central cities	8.4	2.0	22.6	21.6
Suburbs	4.9	1.1	15.9	16.8
Nonmetro	8.9	4.2	19.1	30.7

[1] Families and unrelated individuals were determined as of March 1977.
[2] Poverty level varies according to family size, number of family members under 18 years old, sex of head, and farm-nonfarm residence.
[3] "Family" refers to a group of two persons or more related by blood, marriage, or adoption and residing together. One person in each family is designated the "head," usually the person regarded as such by group members.
[4] Full-time employed family heads refers to those who worked 50 to 52 weeks in 1976.
[5] Unemployed family heads refers to those who did not work in 1976.
[6] Unrelated individuals are persons not living with any relatives; excludes those under 14 years old, members of the Armed Forces living in barracks, college students in dormitories, and inmates of institutions.

Source: (34, table 20).

potential there. The migration, in turn, depletes black human resources in nonmetro places (notably the South), leaving the less educated behind (17). While this may have been true during earlier periods, it does not seem to be the case now. During 1975-78, 35.5 percent of all nonmetro blacks who moved to metro areas had college experience, while 35.6 percent had less than a full high school education (table 14). Therefore, there was no greater exodus of college-trained nonmetro blacks than of those with less education. Some 31.3 percent of all metro blacks who migrated outside SMSAs during this period had attended college. Possibly they were part of a counterstream of black migrants, mostly young adults with relatively more schooling and higher incomes, returning to the rural South (9).[6]

[6] But also note the higher SMSA to non-SMSA migration of blacks with 8 years or less of schooling; this suggests that metro to nonmetro migrants continue to expand the unskilled black labor pool.

Table 14 —Percentage of nonmovers and movers to and from SMSA s, by race and school years completed, persons 25 years old and over, March 1975-78[1]

Race and school years completed	Nonmovers		Movers	
	SMSAs	Outside SMSAs	From outside SMSAs to SMSAs	From SMSAs to outside SMSAs
	Percent			
Black	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
8 years or less	28.8	50.1	20.7	29.8
High school:				
1-3 years	23.1	20.8	14.9	10.7
4 years	30.1	19.6	28.9	28.2
College:				
1-3 years	10.7	5.9	15.7	14.5
4 years or more	7.3	3.6	19.8	16.8
White	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
8 years or less	17.3	26.1	10.7	10.1
High school:				
1-3 years	14.7	15.6	11.2	11.7
4 years	38.3	37.4	29.8	35.9
College:				
1-3 years	14.0	10.7	19.5	19.0
4 years or more	15.7	10.2	28.8	23.3

[1] "SMSA" refers to Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area and collectively corresponds to the term "metro" used in previous tables and graphs.

Source: (32, table 25).

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Nonmetro blacks lag behind whites (all residence categories) and metro blacks on every educational characteristic and outcome variable examined—often by substantial margins. Nonmetro blacks obviously constitute a large minority group with distinct educational problems and subsequent needs which deserve closer attention. Why are nonmetro blacks so severely disadvantaged and what can be done to improve their educational status? Though these matters require a more extensive, systematic analysis than can be attempted here, a number of relevant points noted in the literature will be carefully reviewed.

Researchers have concluded that socioeconomic disadvantage is greatest in the hundreds of nonmetro counties, many predominantly black, lacking services and facilities. Chronic underinvestment in human/community development has resulted in poor housing, inadequate health services, educational underattainment, and other forms of disadvantage which have persisted for decades (6, 7). These areas, unlike more prosperous counties, are not able to provide the depth and variety of programs or skilled specialists found elsewhere. Evidence suggests that differences in financial support between rich and poor school districts translate into differences in student quality. Schools with large concentrations of low-achieving students tend to get fewer resources than those with higher achieving students (17). Lack of nearby colleges or vocational schools has a negative effect on the educational level of nonmetro blacks who cannot afford to attend more distant institutions (4).

The importance of family background and peer influence should not be underestimated. Children from low-income families not only have fewer of the prerequisites to learning such as sufficient shelter, food, and medical care, but are also less likely to be exposed to books and other media which develop cognitive skills. They will probably live in homes where adults have less than a high school education

and cannot furnish the motivational example (through personal accomplishment) for their children to seek advanced formal education. Growing up in a community where one's peers come from similarly impoverished families can only intensify this adverse home background (3, 17). Although low-income black children living in cities are often exposed to educationally negative family/peer group influences, they are generally better off than their nonmetro counterparts who relate to poorer, less educated parents and friends.

Data imply that the low-income level of many nonmetro blacks does not result so much from unemployment as it does from the low-paying jobs they occupy. This could well be the result of inadequate skills training for better jobs, of course, but it may also be due to the types of jobs available in southern nonmetro labor markets (7). In fact, the two factors may reinforce each other. According to some researchers, the fact that blacks obtain less education is an adaptation to their lower occupational and social positions which do not demand high educational qualifications (22). There is little reason to get advanced formal education to enter well-paying, higher status occupations when so few exist. On the other hand, not having further schooling and career training virtually guarantees ineligibility for whatever better opportunities do occur. These mutually reinforcing negative elements are especially critical for nonmetro blacks.

Given this reasonably accurate description of social environment—poverty, inferior or absent educational services, adverse family/peer background, and limited job opportunities—many nonmetro blacks have disadvantages to overcome before they attain higher educational status. Some policy directions suggested by observers to achieve that goal are outlined below.

Nonmetro Development

Both economic and human resource advancement are key points of nonmetro development. One objective of economic development programs is to produce more jobs for nonmetro Americans to increase their income and buying power, as well as furnish greater tax resources for community service improvements. The aim of human resource enrichment is a complementary one, that is, to supply the trained labor force and competent leadership necessary for economic growth. These two aspects of development are interdependent (29). Greater employment opportunities for nonmetro blacks through industrial expansion are definitely needed but alone may not be enough. Poorly educated blacks often lose out to better trained workers in the competition for high-wage jobs created by expanding industry. Whatever new jobs do become available are concentrated in low-paying, unskilled or semi-skilled work. However, a local labor force with an unimpressive education/training record will attract few new enterprises in the first place (18, 27). A nonmetro development strategy beneficial to blacks, therefore, would have to encompass not only economic growth but upgraded general education, better career/vocational preparation, and effective employment training programs, along with measures to reduce job bias where applicable (18, 35).

General Educational Services

Many nonmetro Americans, black or white, need a whole range of improved services to place them on a par with metro residents. Such services include expanded curricula, new educational technologies, less costly transportation, better library facilities, better access to guidance and counseling, new postsecondary offerings, more support staff, more extensive preprimary and adult education programs, and so on. Some policymakers propose that these functions be delivered chiefly through regional educational service agencies, while others advocate funding and cooperative arrangements enabling local systems to augment their own services. Actual implementation of various options may differ from one nonmetro area to another. There is widespread agreement, however, that providing better services for disadvantaged populations like nonmetro blacks could logically start with teacher training. Teachers of nonmetro minorities must be competent generalists, of course. But they also must be sensitive to the special needs of their students, using whatever resources are available to devise appropriate teaching techniques. Training institutions responsible for preparing school faculty should be equipped with the

means to supply in-service as well as pre-service instruction (2, 29). Most observers also agree that minority parents need to be more involved in their children's learning activities. Educational values may be reinforced in children if parents express and advocate them.

Career/Vocational Education

Career/vocational education refers to experiences through which students learn about work and how to perform work roles. Perhaps the greatest need for nonmetro blacks is not merely to understand occupational opportunities but to have the widest possible scope of career training alternatives available (16). More diversified career/vocational education programs help prepare all nonmetro people (including minorities) for new positions in an expansive labor market, foster the job skills desired by businesses who wish to locate, and encourage personal development for local economic growth. The obvious underrepresentation of nonmetro blacks in professional and other white-collar positions cannot be overcome just through schooling, but programs could be devised to give a realistic assessment of choices in those fields. Nonmetro black youth have fairly high career aspirations, despite the limitations imposed by family background and finances (4, 8). Yet the capacity of nonmetro educational systems in predominantly black areas to furnish diverse career/vocational programs is quite restricted. Large capital expenditures make the services expensive, access is difficult for isolated students, insufficient guidance counseling does not foster full knowledge of local or regional employment situations and there is no extensive private support network (25). The development of service delivery mechanisms like area vocational centers/community colleges or mobile facilities could bring special career programs to both nonmetro black youths and adults.

Employment Training Programs

Employment training programs that raise the job skill levels of the nonmetro black population may be the most direct method for achieving employment growth (35). Such programs help ensure that disadvantaged residents are not bypassed for employment opportunities generated through nonmetro economic development. By no means should employment training be confined to public programs; private firms could be encouraged to participate in or independently conduct training assistance projects, especially where there are large numbers of unskilled minority workers (28). Unfortunately, several obstacles hinder these objectives. Relatively few nonmetro governments or private organizations have the expertise in planning and delivering employment training services, especially in nonmetro counties with large black populations (13).

Even when a nonmetro employment training operation is established, it often is not effective in reaching low-income underemployed persons because they lack knowledge about both the existence of the local program and the procedures required for admission (14). Poor access to distant training sites blocks some prospective users who cannot afford the excessive travel costs. Financial/technical assistance as well as outreach information activities may make employment training a more effective instrument for enhancing the educational and occupational status of nonmetro blacks.

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